

Uncle Jim; a Plymouth hero



Per ardua ad astra



Introduction to Second Edition

This memoir was originally compiled for family circulation only and was distributed in print form. Since 2005 when it was completed, some further information has come to light and various articles in English and French newspapers have been published.

Also, this year (2014) is the 70th Anniversary of Jim's death. It seems a good opportunity to update and reformat the work, and then to upload it to my Academia page to make it accessible to others interested in RAF and 2nd World War history.

This new version, like the first, is dedicated to the memory of Jim Adams, and to the other crew-members who perished with him on May 8th 1944.

UNCLE JIM was born ERNEST JAMES RICHARDS on the 18th of December 1924 at Greenbank Nursing Home in Plymouth. His birth was registered in January 1925 in the sub-district of Plymouth North by his mother, ROSE RICHARDS, (b 31.01.1900) who married HARRY OSWALD ADAMS in 1935. Rose was Harry Oswald's second wife and he was a widower at the time of their marriage. His first wife was Rose's elder sister, Lilian May Richards, who left six children. Presumably it was after the marriage of Harry Oswald and Rose that Ernest (Ernie) Richards started to be called Jim Adams. There is no evidence at present that there was ever an adoption or formal change of name. At this time Jim was 10 and Ernest Harry Adams, his first cousin who became his stepbrother, was 12, which is probably why it was Jim who became known by his second name. Interestingly, two of the Richards sisters named a son ERNEST. Their father's name was WILLIAM JOHN RICHARDS, so were the boys named for some other relation?

Jim's only surviving stepbrother at the time this memoir was compiled, Reg Adams, recalled that they were good mates in childhood. They would take long, long walks together, and later even longer bicycle rides. From their home in Mount Gould Terrace they would go along the Embankment of the Plym, up through the woods at Plymbridge until they came out onto the moors, where they would swim in a pool. They would then walk across the moors and come back down through Crownhill, along Mutley Plain, and in past Sutton High School to make their way back home.



Jim with his mother Rose

Jim entered Sutton High School for his secondary education on 10th September 1936. His previous school was Salisbury Road Junior School, a former Elementary School also attended by many other members of our family. His position on entering Sutton was Form 2B, and on leaving, form 4B. He was a day pupil, and Harry Oswald's name is recorded as his father. He was granted a Special Place Award (or Scholarship) for total remission of fees.



Jim in 1936

He was a gifted artist - "could draw anything" - according to his brothers Reg and Ern. His nephew Terry Davey, who can just remember Jim, recalls that he would make model aeroplanes too. However, his record on leaving the school is unfortunately blank. Although he was entered for the School Certificate Examinations due to be taken in the summer of 1940, he left without sitting them. The reason given for this is that he had got a job as a

Telegraph Boy and that the age of entry was 15 to 15 and a half. Although the record-card is blank, his name is recorded on the memorial tablets listing the names of Suttonians who gave their lives during the two world wars. These are housed in the Church of St. John the Evangelist in Exeter Street, Plymouth, since the closure of Sutton High. He was a telegraph boy until he began his war service, and this is recorded in his service record as "Messenger Post Office". The employer details are Ind. Z.A.C. L441. Dis. 177.

Jim enlisted in the RAF on 29th December 1942, when he was described as;

5 feet 9.5 inches", chest 33", hair brown, eyes hazel, pale complexion and having one vaccination mark on his left arm. His home Parish was listed as St. Jude's.

Further details include:

- Medical Category - Grade 1 (11.12.1942)
- F2171.ASCB.22 (30.12.1942)
- Rec. for training as P.N.B [Pilot, Navigator, Bomber]
- F.58. - Unfit for all Air Crew Duties

The last entry seems strange in view of Jim's being assigned to an Air Crew the following year. However, Mr. Tony Tapson, who served in the RAF during WW2, suggests that initially Jim failed the medical for Air Crew and trained as a flight mechanic, but

“ --- subsequently, new categories were introduced, including Flight Engineer, which required trained mechanics to assume flying duties, although they were medically unfit for the three main air crew categories. Those who volunteered with the required proficiency were promoted to Sergeant and flew on missions to maintain the efficiency of the aircraft.”

So Jim's rank indicates that he volunteered for his Air Crew service.

His daily rate of pay was 12/- and 525 days of post-war credits were paid up. His medals are listed as 39/45 Star, A/C/E Star and War medal. Under “Good Conduct Badges” is the entry *D5F, 22.11.43* and his rank is given as Sergeant. He was promoted to Sergeant on 03.01.1943. Two entries refer to his “character” as V.G. (Very Good) and his proficiency as a flight engineer as *Sat.* [Satisfactory].

Details of Jim's movements during his 1 year & 132 days of service are;

- 29.12.1942 - Unit to Oxford No. 3 Reception Centre.
- 11.03.1943 - 61 MU [Maintenance Unit]
- 02.06.1943 - 4STT [No. 4 School of Technical Training]
- 08.11.1943 - Austin Motor
- 18.12.1943 - 1657CU [Conversion Unit]
- 22.12.1943 - Stn. Methwold

- 14.01.1944 - 31 Base @ 1651 CU
- 27.03.1944 - 31 Base
- 27.03.1944 - 3 L.F.S (A) [Lancaster Finishing School, RAF Feltwell]
- 08.04.1944 - 31 Base
- 08.04.1944 - 15 Squadron [Mildenhall]
- 08.05.1944 - Missing
- 08.05.1944 - L.C.A.D.
- 08.05.1944 - Death presumed
- 08.05.1944 - Killed in action

Jim served as a flight engineer in 15 (XV) Squadron, Bomber Command. 15 Squadron was formed in 1915, its badge based on a device previously used and depicting a Hind (female deer). This is related to the fact that in 1936 the Squadron was equipped with Hind and Hart aircraft.

In 1918 one of its RE8's performed the remarkable feat of shooting down three out of four German attackers. Early in World War II it flew Battles and Blenheims, and in 1941 re-equipped with Sterlings. Towards the end of the war, it flew Lancasters as a heavy bomber squadron and dropped 17,250 tons of bombs and 1,600 mines.

The Lancasters were later replaced with Canberras.

Jim - service number 1851113 - was posted to 15 Squadron only one month before he was killed along with the other members of his crew on Monday, May 8th 1944, aged 19. Their names were:



Pilot Officer]	JONES	Thomas George	174018	Pilot
Flying Officer	JONES	Philip Chambers	151767	Air Bomber
Sergeant	GILL	Albert James	1462241	Wireless Operator/Air Gunner
Flight Sergeant	TYLER	Frank Thomas	1812660	Air Gunner
Sergeant	BENJAMIN	Thomas Evan Edward	1255181	Air Gunner
Flying Officer	HORTON	George Aubrey James	142461	Navigator

These young men, plus Jim, were the crew of Lancaster ED 473 which took off from RAF Mildenhall at 00.18 hrs on 8th May 1944 on Operation Nantes, to bomb airfields in France as part of the air campaign to reduce the effectiveness of German military installations and communications prior to D-Day. 73 Lancasters attacked Bouguenais in Brittany, where there is still an airport today (Loire-Atlantique). Only ED473 failed to return. While over the target area it was hit by anti-aircraft fire and exploded on impact with the ground. After the crash the Germans removed the bodies of six of the crew and buried them together in six graves marked “Unbekannter Englisch Flieger” - Unknown English Airman. Flying Officer Horton’s body was flung 200 yards away from the crash and lay undiscovered for three months.

Bomber Command’s operational loss record for this sortie records that a main navigational point for the crew on their way to Nantes from Mildenhall was Start Point in Devon. Hopefully this brought some happy memories of home to Jim in his last few hours.

The story of these seven deaths and of the loss of one single aircraft give some insight into the nature of life in wartime, and of the tremendous efforts expended to keep up the pressure on the Axis forces. ED473 was an Avro Lancaster Mk. III bomber, the 131st Machine of a production patch of 620 aircraft built by Avro, Manchester. It is known to have served with number 50 Squadron and no. 1667 Conversion Unit before being taken-on-charge by XV Squadron in January 1944. It flew 25 missions with 13 different pilots for 15 Squadron before its final mission on 8th May 1944.

I know little of the service history of most of the crew. However, Pilot Officer “Tommy” Jones reported to Aircrew Training Centre, RAF Uxbridge, in April 1941. His training took him to Brighton, Newquay, Manchester, Brough, Manchester again, Canada, Harrogate, Shawbury, Holme on Spalding, Shawbury again, Childs Ercall, Methwold and Stradishall. Early in March 1944, after three years intensive training, Thomas and his crew were ready for combat. Jim also underwent a long period of training before beginning operational duties, as detailed above in the notes from his service record. After two sorties, one on 18th April on Lancaster EC 395 and one on 1st May in Lancaster LL889, Jim

was killed on his third operational flight. This was the first sortie on which all seven men served together. The target of Jim's April sortie was Rouen in France; that of May 1st was Chambly.

After the war an officer of No. 1 Missing Research and Enquiry Unit discovered the graves and six of the crew were laid to rest side by side in a War Graves Commission plot, where they still lie, in the Communal Cemetery at Pont-du-Cens, a suburb of Nantes. Flying Officer Horton lies separately from the others in Plot L, Row B, Grave 19.

Jim rests in Grave 22 in Plot L, Row C. His headstone names him as E. J. Adams although his Scroll of Commemoration reads *J. E. Adams*. His death certificate names him as James Ernest Adams.



Jim's headstone at Pont-du-Cens, Nantes

Jim lived for only 19 years, yet his place in the family history is secure, his name was spoken and is still spoken with respect and affection. The loss to our family is one of an uncountable number of such losses across the world between 1939 and 1945; Bomber Command alone lost 66,000 crew.

***For our “tomorrow”,
they gave their “today”.***

SIXTY YEARS ON - a foreign field

Early in 2004, the niece of Pilot Tommy Jones was contacted by M. Philippe Waegeman of Nantes, who had found a card she left at the graveside in Pont-du-Cens. He has an interest in the history of WW1 and WW2 and was astonished and moved to find photographs of two of the crew, and evidence that they were still remembered and visited after 60 years. He contacted Tommy's niece and undertook on our behalf a search of the local archives. This located the exact site of the crash in the village of Ville-au-Denis near Bouguenais, and M. Waegeman has talked to people who remember the crash and found parts of the Lancaster in their gardens. It is also clear now that the men were first interred at Bouguenais and moved to the cemetery at Pont-du-Cens after the liberation. An article about all this has appeared in a local French newspaper, with photos of M. Waegeman, of Tommy Jones, and of the Lancaster. [See Appendices below]

On May 8th 2004 M. Waegeman was present at the setting up of a memorial in the corner of the field where the Lancaster came down, along with many of the villagers, and the mayor and Councillors of the Bouguenais Commune.

On 24th July 2004, my husband Andrew and I were staying at Le Croisic, some way west of Nantes, and set out about 9.30 to meet M. Waegeman by arrangement at the little car park outside Pont-du-Cens cemetery. We went across the road to the flower shop, where I bought two potted plants, one for Jim and one for Tommy. Philippe had brought with him a small Union flag for Jim's plot, as it was an Adams Family visit, and we duly placed this at the foot of Jim's stone, with his flowers on top of it. After placing Tommy's flowers, I photographed Andrew and Philippe beside his grave. Then Andrew photographed me and Philippe beside Jim's. I took pictures of all the headstones individually, which I had not done before. As I explained to Philippe, on my previous visit the rest of the crew had been rather a blur to me – Jim's comrades – but since learning more they have all come to feel like family.

After the visit to the graves we drove around the peripherique to La Touriere, a tiny place where some bits of the Lancaster were found. Also there was an excellent view of the Loire-Atlantique airport, which in 1944 was

Chateau-Bougon airfield, in German hands, and the main target for Operation Nantes. It was named for the Chateau visible still in the woods from where we stood. Philippe also took us back in time and explained which roads were and were not there in 1944 and exactly where the Nazis had put up a barrier across the road into Ville-au-Denis to prevent curious people who came over from Bouguenais getting too close. We then went to a nearer vantage point to look again at the Airport, and I took a couple of pictures there.

Then it was time for lunch, so we followed to the family apartment, where we sat down to an excellent lunch. Afterwards we drove to Ville-au-Denis to meet the villagers, wonderful old folk, very little English but we managed. We walked from the village street into the field and I realised with a shock that if the plane had come down 100 yards further east there would have been no village. Two of the ladies there had seen the bodies of the 6 lying in the field, all fallen close together. Despite the ban by the Germans against any of them going near the field, and despite their parents backing that up, they had sneaked into the trees to look. I was sitting side by side with women who had seen Jim's body, Tommy's body, and I found it overwhelming. They are all so proud of the memorial and so glad to know the truth behind this event which for 60 years they have known only as *the night the plane came down*. Now they have the names of all the crew listed on the memorial, with a tribute in French and English. Well, no wonder I was weepy. But more was to come. First they extracted from the flowers in front of the memorial a bunch of corn stalks grown this year in that very field, and presented it to me.

Then we all drove a short distance to the Community hall for drinks. As we sat in a circle, a gentleman came up and thrust a plastic carrier onto my lap. Inside was a twisted metal pipe with bullet-holes in - a piece of the Lancaster, which has now had a display case made for it and is on the wall in my hallway in honour of the fallen.

2012 - Remembrance at last

In June 2012 a long-awaited memorial to the 66,000 dead of Bomber Command was dedicated in Green Park, London. I was able to visit it at Christmas 2013 thanks to my sister-in-law Rosemary's intrepid driving through the capital. Here is one of the images she took for me.



(c) Rosemary Wilman 2013

APPENDICES

(1) Reunion unearths memory of Devon airman Uncle Jim

By *This is South Devon* | Posted: May 27, 2009 (Herald Express)

THE RAF squadron I flew with during the war held a reunion earlier this month at Mildenhall in Suffolk.

I was not there, too far to travel these days, but sent my good wishes to the dwindling band of old codgers who remember the happy days of comradeship and the good friends we lost.

I gather it went well but it was different from those I attended in the past. For 32 years it was run by Don Clarke who made it his life's work and was awarded the MBE for his efforts.

But he has retired and so have most of the old guard and they have handed over the baton of remembrance to a new generation who were not born until well after the war ended.

When I received the reunion invitation I was astonished to find it came from Devon. The new secretary is Andrew Bridgwater, who lives at Kingston, near Kingsbridge, and he took over the job because his family remembers a 19-year-old airman who was killed in action 65 years ago this month.

He was Sgt Jim Adams, who worked as a telegraph boy in Plymouth before he joined up, no doubt delivering sad news telegrams to families who dreaded their arrival.

Sue Bridgwater, Andrew's wife, is his niece and as she grew up she treasured the stories she heard about her uncle.

I was flying from Mildenhall at the same time as Jim, although we never met as far as I know.

I was a gunner with 622 Squadron while he was a flight engineer with 15, the other squadron on the base. But I feel a bond with him because we both took part in that operation on the night of May 7 when he lost his life.

We were attacking an airfield near Nantes as part of the run up to D Day and, by comparison with raids on the Ruhr and other hot spots, it was for us a fairly uneventful trip.

My log book records that we carried out 'visual bombing on runways'.

But not for Jim and his crew in Lancaster ED 473 LS. While over the target area they were hit by anti-aircraft fire and crashed. The bomber exploded on impact and all seven were killed. It was just after midnight.

Seventy three aircraft took part in the raid and theirs was the only one not to return. The lottery of war.

Sue Bridgwater became determined to find out more about Uncle Jim, and she has compiled a booklet telling his all-too-short life story. Pictures of him as a smiling boy

with his family, a drawing he made at school and details of his job as 'messenger, Post Office'.

Even his official RAF description when he joined up: "Chest 33 inches, eyes hazel, pale complexion and having one vaccination mark on his left arm."

She researched RAF records, contacted relatives of some of Jim's fellow crew members and gradually built up a picture of what happened after the Lancaster was shot down.

The Germans had sealed off the area and set up barriers to keep out prying eyes but several children sneaked in and watched the bodies being removed.

The airmen were buried locally but when the war ended were transferred to a cemetery in Nantes, 10 miles away.

Years later several relatives travelled to France to visit the graves but had no idea of where exactly the plane had crashed.

One of them left a contact card at the cemetery and it was seen by a local historian, Philippe Waegeman.

He filled in the missing details, contacted villagers who remembered seeing the plane come down and eventually a memorial was erected on the crash site, with the names of the young airmen.

It was unveiled on the 60th anniversary with residents forming a solemn procession.

Sue and husband Andrew travelled out to meet Philippe Waegeman. They put flowers on the graves and drove to a place where small pieces of the Lancaster were found.

They also talked to villagers who, as children, had seen the crashed bomber and the bodies, all lying close together.

"No wonder I was weepy," Sue recalls in her booklet. "But more was to come. First they extracted from the flowers in front of the memorial a bunch of corn stalks grown in that very field and presented it to me.

"Then a man came up and thrust a plastic carrier into my lap. Inside was a twisted metal pipe with bullet holes in it — a piece of Jim's Lancaster."

That fragment of the plane now has a place of honour in the Bridgwater's Devon home together with her uncle's medals and photograph.

It is good to know our squadron heritage is in such safe hands.

A touching story that makes you realise, yet again, just how lucky some of us were.

French villagers remember crew of Lancaster bomber shot down near their homes

Memorial at last for wartime airmen

TO the residents of the tiny Breton village of Ville-au-Denis it was known as "the night the plane came down" when a blazing British bomber landed so perilously close to their homes that fragments of the aircraft smashed into their gardens.

In a field just 100 yards away, the RAF Lancaster, ED473, had exploded on impact, killing instantly the seven airmen whose mission to destroy a nearby German-occupied airfield was their very first "op" together.

Among the dead was 19-year-old flight engineer Sgt Jim Adams, a former Royal Mail messenger boy from Plymouth. He had failed a medical to become a pilot or navigator, but after training as a mechanic was given the chance to volunteer for air crew service – and he grabbed it with both hands.

Exactly a month after being posted to 15 Squadron at RAF Mildenhall in Suffolk, he and the rest of his crew teamed up with more than 70 other Lancasters to attack German installations in Bouguenais, Brittany, in the run-up to the Allied invasion of mainland Europe.

Remarkably only one of the bombers failed to return to England. It was ED473, which was hit by anti-aircraft fire as it turned to head back home on May 8, 1944.

After the crash, the Germans sealed off the area and set up barriers to keep out prying eyes. Parents told their children to stay away, but several youngsters turned a deaf ear and sneaked into nearby trees where they saw the bodies and watched as they

COLIN BRADLEY

were removed from the wreckage. Six were buried side by side in nearby Bouguenais cemetery in graves marked "Unbekannter Englisch Flieger" – Unknown English Airman. The seventh – Flying Officer George Horton, the navigator – had been flung 200 yards from the wreckage and his body lay undiscovered for three months before being found and buried near his friends.

When the war was finally over, the bodies were traced by the RAF's Missing Research and Enquiry Service and transferred to a Commonwealth War Graves Commission plot

'Jim's name is still spoken of with respect'

in the communal cemetery at Pont-du-Cens in Nantes, less than ten miles away. For almost 60 years after the tragedy villagers knew nothing about the identities of the British airmen who had died on their doorstep.

And relatives of the lost crew had no idea exactly where the Lancaster had crashed, despite making emotional trips to France where they visited the graves. On one of the cemetery visits they left a contact card, hoping that it would spark a reaction and produce more information. It did.

It was seen by amateur historian Philippe Waegeman, from Nantes, who got in touch after trawling through the archives and tracing



● REMEMBERED: Flight engineer Jim Adams, of Plymouth, who died when Lancaster bomber was shot down over France in 1944

villagers in Ville-au-Denis who remembered the incident. Soon an official memorial, listing the names of the young fliers and telling of their ultimate sacrifice, was erected at the crash site.

Its unveiling was carried out on the 60th anniversary of the tragedy, with local residents taking part in a solemn procession and commemoration service.

Recently Sgt Adams' niece, Plymouth-born Sue Bridgwater, travelled from her London home to France to visit both the cemetery

and the crash site. With her husband Andrew, she met the villagers for the first time. "They are all so proud of the memorial and so glad to finally know the truth behind what happened," Sue said.

"It was quite incredible standing in the field and meeting those villagers. It was very moving."

"Jim lived for only 19 years, but his place in the family history is secure."

"His name was spoken of – and is still spoken of – with respect."

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WMN article by Colin Bradley

(3)

Nantes

HISTOIRE

La mémoire retrouvée du Lancaster III ED 473 LS-D et de son équipage

En se promenant dans les allées du carré militaire britannique du cimetière de la Gaudinière, Philippe Waegeman a remonté la piste de l'équipage d'un Lancaster abattu à la Ville-au-Denis, à Bouguenais, le 8 mai 1944

Il s'appelait Thomas Jones et avait fière allure dans son uniforme bleu d'officier de la Royal Air Force.

Pilote réserviste volontaire affecté au 15^e Squadron, à Mildenhall dans le Suffolk, il est mort à 21 ans, le 8 mai 1944, avec six de ses camarades, loin de son Londres natal, dans le crash de son Lancaster III, à la Ville-au-Denis à Bouguenais.

Son corps et celui des autres membres de l'équipage du ED 473 LS-D reposent aujourd'hui dans le carré militaire britannique du cimetière de la Gaudinière à Nantes.

« J'ai vu une carte au pied de sa tombe »

C'est là, au hasard d'une rêverie, qu'un passionné d'histoire est tombé en arrêt devant la stèle blanche. « En me promenant dans les allées, j'ai vu une carte au pied de sa tombe. Il y avait dessus une adresse en Angleterre », explique timidement Philippe Waegeman.

Un corps retrouvé trois mois plus tard
Curieux de nature, le promeneur

écrit. Et c'est le neveu du pilote qui lui répond. Il cherche des renseignements sur son aïeul. Philippe Waegeman se propose de l'aider.

« Je suis tout d'abord allé aux Archives départementales de Loire-Atlantique où j'ai retrouvé des rapports de police sur le crash de l'appareil à la Ville-au-Denis, tout près de Château-Bougon. Puis j'ai continué mes investigations et, avec l'aide de la mairie de Bouguenais, j'ai retrouvé cinq témoins qui habitent toujours aujourd'hui autour de La Ville-au-Denis ». Philippe Waegeman les rencontre à plusieurs reprises. « L'un se souvient avoir eu une roue de l'avion dans son jardin. Un autre parle du moteur planté dans le sol ».

Tous sont formels. L'avion était à basse altitude et a explosé en vol. Les sept membres d'équipage sont tués sur le coup. Six corps sont récupérés par les Allemands pour procéder à leur identification et leur inhumation au cimetière communal de Bouguenais (ils seront transférés après la libération à Nantes).

Le septième homme ne sera retrouvé que trois mois plus tard. « Il avait été



Philippe Waegeman et le double de la carte trouvée au pied de la stèle du pilote, au cimetière de la Gaudinière.

défecté. En fait, il ne restait que le tronç. L'une des témoins qui était volontaire à la Croix Rouge s'en souvient très bien. Elle était de ceux qui ont transporté le corps au cimetière ».

Sur les lieux du crash

Tous ces témoignages, Philippe Waegeman les a transmis à son correspondant anglais, lequel les a déposés au service historique de la RAF à Londres.

Et, en échange, le neveu du pilote lui a envoyé des photos : celle de Thomas George Jones, tout sourire, la pipe entre les dents ; celle du sergent

Ernest James Adams, 19 ans, et celle du Lancaster, prise en 1943 sur sa base de Mildenhall. C'est de là que l'avion est parti le 8 mai 1944 pour bombarder l'aérodrome de Château-Bougon. Sa dernière mission.

Après soixante ans d'oubli, l'histoire de l'équipage du Lancaster III ED 473 LS-D est sortie de l'ombre. Le neveu du pilote l'a promis : il viendra, d'ici l'été, se recueillir sur les lieux du crash. Philippe Waegeman, lui, y sera le 8 mai prochain, le jour anniversaire. « J'y tiens. Je sais quel qu'un qui a des principes ».

Dominique Bloyet

Ils n'avaient pas 25 ans...

Ils étaient jeunes. Un seul des sept membres d'équipage avait dépassé les 25 ans. Et tous ont sacrifié leur vie pour la liberté.

• Sergent Ernest James Adams, 19 ans, originaire de Plymouth.

• Sergent Thomas Evan Edward Benjamin, 21 ans, originaire de Harlesden.

• Sergent Albert James Cill, 22 ans, originaire de Dagenham.

• Officier navigant George Aubrey James Horton, 29 ans, originaire de Marlborough.

• Officier bombardier Philip Chambers Jones, 23 ans, originaire de Liverpool.

• Officier pilote Thomas George Jones, 21 ans, originaire de Londres.

• Sergent chef Frank Thomas Tyler, âge non communiqué.



Le Lancaster III ED 473 LS-D, photographié en 1943 sur sa base de Mildenhall, dans le Suffolk. En médaillon : Thomas George Jones, le pilote.

Article from Nantes newspaper 2004

(4)



La mémoire retrouvée

La commémoration du 8 Mai 1945 est chaque année l'occasion de se souvenir de cette période synonyme de destruction, de mort, de blessures et de larmes, de rendre hommage aux victimes de la guerre et à ceux qui ont œuvré pour le retour de la paix et de la démocratie. Quel meilleur moyen alors que de donner la parole aux témoins de cette époque ? La Médiathèque a ainsi proposé une exposition à la mémoire des patriotes fusillés en 1943, réalisée par le Comité Départemental du Souvenir des Fusillés de Châteaubriant et Nantes et présenté un documentaire sur le Procès des 42, réalisé par des étudiants en BTS métiers de l'audiovisuel du lycée Léonard de Vinci (Montaigu). Ce documentaire, donnant la parole à des acteurs du procès, déportés résistants, et la participation de Michel Doisneau, président de la Fédération Nationale des Déportés et Internés Résistants et Patriotes de Loire-Atlantique, de Jean Chauvin, fils d'un résistant FTP fusillé, et de Guy Floch, dont le père a été déporté, ont permis à une trentaine de personnes de mieux connaître cet épisode tragique de l'histoire de Nantes. Le 8 mai 2004 fut également l'occasion de rendre hommage au sept membres d'équipage du bombardier de la Royal Air Force abattu le 8 mai 1944 au lieu dit la Tourière (Ville au Denis). Madeleine Rousseau, qui habitait et habite toujours la Ville au Denis, se souvient avec une grande émotion de cette nuit où « une roue de l'avion est tombée dans le jardin et où un moteur a défoncé la toiture ». Engagée dans la Croix-Rouge à cette époque, elle avait également accompagné au cimetière de Bouguenais la dépouille du pilote du bombardier dont le corps n'avait été retrouvé que trois mois après les autres. Une plaque commémorative a été implantée afin de matérialiser ce souvenir sorti de l'ombre. Les familles de deux des aviateurs britanniques viendront s'y recueillir cet été.

Article in Bouguenais Infos 2004 1

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND SOURCES

Places/Organisations

Air Historical Branch (RAF), MINISTRY OF DEFENCE, Building 266, RAF Bentley Priory, Stanmore, Middlesex HA7 3HH Tel 020 8838 7483

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 2, Marlow Road, Maidenhead Tel 01628 634221 www.cwgc.org.uk

The Family Records Centre, 1, Myddleton Street, London EC1 Tel 020 8392 5300 (Now at the national Archives in Kew)

Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Road, London SE1 6HZ Tel 020 7416 5255. www.iwm.org.uk

Imperial War Museum, Duxford, Cambridge CB2 4QR Tel 01223 835000. www.iwm.org.uk

The Mildenhall Register (15, 149 & 622 Bomber Squadrons' Association).
Mr G Reynolds secretary@mildenhallregister.stirlingpilot.org.uk

Old Suttonians Association <http://www.oldsutts.co.uk/contact.html>

Plymouth and West Devon Record Office, Unit 3, Clare Place, Plymouth, Devon, PL4 0JW Tel 01752 305940 www.plymouth.gov.uk/star/pwdrocts.htm

The Public Record Office, Ruskin Avenue, Kew Richmond, Surrey, Tel 020 8876 3444 www.pro.gov.uk [Now the National Archives]

Royal Air Force, Personnel Management Agency, RAF Innsworth, Gloucester, GL3 1EZ

People

Thanks to all of the following for their knowledge and their willingness to share it with me, also for their understanding of the importance of this memoir.

Martyn & Valerie Ford-Jones

Joan Isaac, niece of Pilot Officer Thomas George Jones, who fell alongside Jim.

Tony Tapson, who also served in the RAF during World War II

Mr. Don Clarke MBE, Mr. Fred Coney and other members of the Mildenhall Register

The late Mr. Thomas Edward Neale (Uncle Tom).

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